



Sea Kayaking in South Central Alaska



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The splash of whale's tail, the inquisitive stare of a harbor seal, and the cool sea air blowing on your face, and you know you are experiencing Alaska much the way Native Alaskans have done for over a thousand years. The coastline of Alaska is longer than that of all the lower 48 states combined, which means there are plenty of areas for sea kayaking, places like; Glacier Bay, Tongass National Forest,

Kodiak Island, Resurrection Bay, Kachemak Bay, and Prince William Sound. The areas covered here are located in southcentral Alaska.

In your excitement to experience the thrill of sea-kayaking in Alaska, it is important to remember to do research before embarking on your kayak trip. Knowledge of the winds, tides and coastline are essential for trips here. There are a number of

excellent publications about sea kayaking in Alaska. Information is also available from local outfitters and rental agencies. Most kayak rental shops require proof of previous kayaking experience in order to rent. Many offer courses, workshops and guided trips.

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

Prince William Sound is dominated by the Chugach National Forest. It contains countless bays and fjords ideal for kayaking and camping. Fishing enthusiasts will discover a myriad of lakes and streams. Wildlife watchers can spot sea otters, whales, porpoises and a variety of bird life. Kayakers can charter boats or air taxis for drop-offs to a particular site from Whittier or Valdez. There are numerous Forest Service and State cabins available for public use. Wilderness camping is permitted in the National Forest using minimum impact camping techniques. Check the area you are going to go kayaking in and see if a back-county permit is required. Additional kayaking possibilities are available out of Cordova and Yakutat.

RESURRECTION BAY

Seward is the gateway to Resurrection Bay and Kenai Fjords National Park.



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Popular trips include Caines Head State Park, Thumb Cove State Marine Park, and Aialik Bay in Kenai Fjords National Park. Kayakers can paddle out to Caines Head (about 5 miles one way) and boat charters are available for drop-offs in Aialik and other bays (\$225 and up). Thumb Cove is a nice day paddle and has two state public use cabins where you can spend the night.

Minimum impact camping is allowed on National Park and State Park lands. There are also public use cabins available within the Kenai Fjords National Park and Resurrection Bay. These cabins can be reserved through the appropriate agency. (See Cabin Rental section.) Kayaks can be rented in Anchorage or Seward.

KACHEMAK BAY

The town of Homer, provides access to the Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness Area, and to Seldovia. Homer Spit has camping, water taxis, fishing charters, boardwalks and lots more. There are three public use cabins available at Halibut Cove, rented through the Alaska State Parks. Wilderness camping is allowed in the State Park and on

State Land. There are campsites in the State Park, as well as hiking trails and tidal pools to explore. Kayak rentals are available in Anchorage and Homer.

KODIAK

Kodiak is a more remote destination, but offers tremendous sea kayaking opportunities for the more adventurous. There are three main areas for kayaking: Kodiak, Afognak and Shuyak Islands. These islands with their miles rugged coastlines with many secluded coves, have state parks with camping and public use cabins available.

BEARS

Black and brown (grizzly) bears inhabit most of Alaska. Read all bear safety information provided and follow the proper procedures for camping and hiking in bear country to reduce the chances of a confrontation. Firearms are not allowed in some parks; check with the managing agency before you go. A red pepper-based aerosol



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spray for repelling bears is available in many sporting goods stores.

WEATHER

Spring arrives in mid-May (later in Arctic and coastal areas) and autumn begins in late August. High winds prevent kayaking later than August. Weather conditions during this short season can include everything from temperatures of 90F to week-long rainstorms. Coastal Alaska is rain country!! Hypothermia is a real concern at all times of the year. Be prepared to deal with the elements and be self-sufficient!

INSECTS

Mosquito populations are highest in June and July, and are followed in August by blackflies and biting gnats ("no-see-ums"). Insect repellent and a tent with mosquito netting (preferably gnat-proof as well) are essential. A headnet may prove useful. Choose a campsite on a ridge or on a bank where a breeze will bring relief from insects.



<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/arbor/heatto.htm>

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a dangerous, but surprisingly common injury that occurs when the body loses heat without producing enough to make up for the loss. Hypothermia can occur even in summer, especially in Alaska where temperatures in the 50s (Fahrenheit) and rain are common. Hypothermia can be life threatening, so it is very important to know how to avoid it, recognize its symptoms and how to treat it.

WATER

Boil, filter or chemically treat all water from lakes and streams before drinking. Giardia, an



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intestinal bacterium that can cause great discomfort, is widespread in Alaska. Glacial rivers are full of silt which can clog filters; let the water sit overnight so the silt settles out or filter it first through a clean handkerchief.

MAPS

Get U. S. Geological Survey topographic maps (scale 1"=1 mile or 1:63,360). Most public information brochures do not have enough detail to provide an accurate picture of your route. Please note: topographic maps of Alaska are 10 to 40 years old. Trails, cabins, roads, and even some villages shown on maps may no longer exist. Check with the land managing agency if you have questions.

PRIVATE LAND

Much of Alaska's backcountry contains mining claims and private lands, including Alaska Native Corporation and village lands, and you may not be welcome. For permission to camp on Native-owned lands contact the village council; even if you do not get a response your letter will be on record. The Wilderness Guide has addresses (see publications section).

PERMITS

Permits for camping and backcountry hiking are not required in most public land units in Alaska; however check in advance with the land managing agency.

TRIP PLAN

File a "trip plan" with a friend or the agency managing the area that you plan to visit, and let them know when you get back! Allow extra time for bad weather and take extra food in case you are delayed.

Public Use Cabin Rentals

Forest Service cabins, within the Chugach National Forest, may be rented for \$25.00 to \$45.00 per



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night. Reservations are required and are made up to 180 days in advance by calling: 1-877-444-6777 or <http://www.ReserveUSA.com>

Kenai Fjords National Park cabin rentals are \$35.00 per night. Reservations are required and may be made by phone, mail or in person at:

AK. Public Lands Information Center
605 W. 4th Ave. #105
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2737

State Park cabin rentals are \$25.00 to \$50.00 per night. Reservations are required and may be made in

person or by mail at State Park District Offices or at:

Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources
State Public Information Office
550 W. 7th Ave. #1260
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 269-8400

General Information:

Knik Canoers and Kayakers Inc
(Non-profit organization promoting Canoeing and Kayaking in Alaska) (907) 566-1554 or <http://www.kck.org/>
Maps: ask.usgs.gov/products.html

PUBLICATIONS:

Maps and Books available from the Alaska Natural History Association (907) 274-8440 or www.alaskanha.org:

The Milepost.
Vernon Publications, Inc.
Bellevue, WA 98004.

Alaska Wilderness Guide.
3000 Northup Way, Bellevue, WA 98008-9643.
(Contains addresses of village councils).

Discover Southeast Alaska with Pack & Paddle. Margaret Piggott. 1990. The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA.



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Kayaks off Nunivak Island, Bering Sea, Alaska August 1936

Cruising Guide to Prince William Sound. (Vol's. I & II, Western and Eastern). Jim & Nancy Lethcoe. 1985. Prince William Sound Books, Valdez, AK.



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Kayak: A Manual of Technique
William Nealy. Menasha Ridge Press.

Kayaking in Southeast Alaska: The Best Trips and Tours from Misty Fjords to Glacier Bay. Jim Howard. June 1999. Globe Pequot Publisher.

Kayaks to Hell. William Nealy. Menasha Ridge Press

Trails Illustrated Maps to Katchemak Bay, Kenai Fjords, Glacier Bay and Prince William Sound (East and West)

Kayak Rentals*

AK Mountaineering & Hiking
2633 Spenard Rd
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 272-1811
<http://www.alaskan.com/amh/>

Alaska Outdoor Adventures
<http://www.akadventures.com>

Alaska Raft and Kayak
401 Tudor Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 561-7238
<http://www.alaskaraftandkayak.com/>

Alaska Viking Cruises
P.O. Box 81516
Fairbanks, AK 99708
(907) 455-6827
<http://www.alaskaviking.com/>

Alaska Sea Kayakers PWS Inc.
2207 Spenard Rd #209 Anchorage, AK 99503 (877) 472-2534
<http://www.alaskaseakayakers.com>

Anadyr Adventures
P.O. Box 1821
Valdez, AK 99686
(907) 835-2814
<http://www.anadyradventures.com>

Central Charters Booking Agency
4241 Homer Spit Road
Homer, AK 99603
(907) 235-7847
http://www.thewhalesong.com/central_charters.htm

Cordova Coastal Outfitters
P.O. Box 1834



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Cordova, AK 99574
(907) 424-7424
<http://www.ctcak.net/~cchamber/charters.html>

Homer Ocean Charters
Box 2543
Homer, AK 99603
(907) 235-6212
http://www.homerocean.com/alaska_kayaking.htm

Honey Charters
P.O. Box 708
Whittier, AK 99693
(907) 472-2493
<http://www.honeycharters.com/>

Hunter Creek Outfitters
HCO 2-7741-M
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-1577
<http://www.huntercreekoutfitters.com>

Kayak'atak
P.O. Box 109
Seldovia, AK 99663
(907) 234-7425
<http://www.alaska.net/~kayaks/>

Kayak & Custom Adventures
414 K St.
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 258-3866
<http://www.kayakak.com/>

Last Frontier Diving
<http://www.lastfrontierdiving.com>

Prince William Sound Kayak Center (Whittier)
P.O. Box 233008
Anchorage, AK 99523
(907) 472-2452
<http://www.pwskayakcenter.com/>

REI
1200 W. Northern Lights
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 272-4565
<http://www.rei.com/stores/anchorage/alaskabar1.html>

True North Kayak Adventures
P.O. Box 2319
Homer, AK 99603
(907) 235-0708
<http://www.truenorthkayak.com/>



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* This listing is by no means comprehensive. If feel you have been left off this list and you rent sea-kayaks in the Southcentral region, let us know so that we may include you.